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President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 49 (*continued*)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly is today discussing one of the most important items on its agenda: the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters. Last session's report (A/55/47) was the result of long discussions in the Open-ended Working Group on this item. In that connection, we express great respect and admiration for the great effort exerted by the then Chairman, the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, Mr. Harri Holkeri, and his two Vice-Chairmen, who so ably guided the work of the Open-ended Working Group.

The Group's discussions during the fifty-fifth session highlighted the urgency of restructuring the Security Council, a principal organ of the United Nations, with a view to enhancing the transparency of its working methods. All the working documents submitted in the course of the Group's meetings by delegations, organizations and regional groups, taken together, indicated how essential it is that we reform the Security Council in order to strengthen its role in the maintenance of international peace and security and to make it better suited to facing the challenges of the twenty-first century.

But owing to lack of agreement among Member States on the basic principles of reform and because of changes made after eight years of discussion — in spite of agreement that had earlier been achieved — it has proved impossible to agree on the nature of the changes required with respect to the number of new Council members and to the Council's working methods. Yet we cannot ignore the fact that real progress was made during the discussions, particularly on the question of the Council's procedures and working methods. There was almost universal agreement on a number of the procedures and other proposals under discussion and on some of the changes that ought to made in the Council's working methods. In fact, the Council has indeed adopted some new procedures and working methods.

Kuwait has often stated its position on the question of an increase in the membership of the Security Council and improvements in its working methods, either on its own or collectively through the organizations of which Kuwait is a member. Today's debate provides yet another opportunity for us to reaffirm our position, which is based on the following principles.

First, Kuwait supports an increase in the membership of the Security Council, although the number of members should not be too large to maintain the Council's efficiency and effectiveness as it plays its

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role in decision-making and in confronting conflicts that threaten international peace and security.

Secondly, however the membership of the Council is increased, it must be consistent with the principles of State sovereignty and equitable geographical distribution. The new makeup of the Security Council should reflect the universal character of the United Nations.

Thirdly, with respect to an increase in the number of permanent members of the Security Council, we agree that such an increase should be limited. We consider that the criteria we should use to decide whether a State shall be a permanent member include proof, through its relations with the United Nations, of its ability to shoulder responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and to implement the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. It is the General Assembly that, in accordance with criteria and procedures to be agreed upon, should decide which States are to become permanent members.

Fourthly, in connection with reform of the Council's working methods and procedures and improvement of links between the Security Council and other United Nations organs, specifically the General Assembly, we entirely agree with all proposals aimed at increasing transparency and clarity in the Council's work. We would support any proposal that made for a more flexible flow of information between Council members and other Members of the United Nations. Here, we stress the importance of codifying the Security Council's working procedures and any procedures that may be agreed upon in the Working Group. That should take place without waiting for complete agreement on other issues such as the size and composition of the Council, the decision-making process, et cetera.

Fifthly, Kuwait would support retaining the mechanism by which we elect non-permanent members of the Security Council, which is in accordance with Article 23, paragraph 2, of the Charter. After all, that mechanism enables smaller States such as Kuwait more readily to become members of the Security Council and to contribute to its work.

Finally, we are very well aware that the issue of the right of veto is a thorny and sensitive one. We have seen nearly complete agreement emerge in the Working Group on the need to regulate the way in which the right of veto is used. Many significant proposals have been made; these certainly are worthy of fuller discussion. We hope it will be possible to agree on wording that would be satisfactory to all parties and that would enable the Security Council to carry out its functions without hindrance.

In conclusion, we hope that discussions in the Working Group will lead to the kind of consensus that will guarantee an enhanced and strengthened role for the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security and in facing the challenges of the twenty-first century. To that end, the delegation of Kuwait will play an active role in future discussions in the Working Group. We hope that the Group's work will be crowned with success.

Mr. Vento (Italy): Only two short weeks ago, the General Assembly examined the annual report of the Security Council, issuing an almost unanimous appeal — I would even say there was true general agreement — for greater transparency and participation in the workings of that body. Our debate today can thus be seen as a logical extension of our deliberations on 15 and 16 October, and it forces us to ask why so many countries continue to appeal for Security Council reform.

The immediate answer is that deep changes, both in international relations and in the role and function of the United Nations, make a pressing, inevitable case for the Security Council — the body assigned with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security — to undergo comprehensive reform in all its aspects.

When the exercise on Security Council reform began more than eight years ago, shortly after the end of the cold war, there were those who thought that it should amount to little more than an alteration in the composition of the Council through the creation of new permanent members. To their mind, issues like transparency, accountability, participation, effectiveness and the assessment of Security Council's work seemed marginal. According to this approach, the hereditary prerogatives of permanency — some call them "special responsibilities" — created during the unique, unrepeatable conditions of the years after the Second World War could be updated with a quick fix by anointing a select few to enter the club.

This unilateral approach, which runs counter to the principle of equality between United Nations Members and to the movement towards growing legitimacy in international relations, was ultimately defeated. There will be no new countries that are "more equal" than others, because the vast majority of United Nations Members are calling for a different type of reform. They want to close the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots", whether individual States or large regions of the world. This vast majority of United Nations Members therefore rejects any new elevation of States — however unlikely that may be — that would penalize 180 other countries in order to realize the ambitions of the newly anointed. Whatever margins for disagreement might exist, I am sure we could all agree that such a manoeuvre would hardly make the Council's actions more timely and effective. The time has come to see who is really holding the reform process hostage by pursuing maximalist claims that reject any and all compromise solutions.

Eight years of debate have proved that effective Security Council reform must primarily address the working methods and decision-making processes of that body, rather than seek to increase the number of privileged members. The Security Council represents a social contract of sorts: on the inside, this confers international legitimacy on its members; on the outside, many others stand ready to lend effectiveness to the actions of the Council in exchange for participation in the decision-making process. A proper balance between legitimacy, participation and effectiveness is the core of the reform. If this contract is broken, the Council will cease to function properly.

New global threats to peace, such as international terrorism, have ushered in a new era, and require a different type of global governance based on a strong and resolute culture of consensus: collective decision-making and global responsibility in place of the unilateral promotion of narrow national interests. The business of the Security Council needs true leadership, based on objectivity, collegiality and unity of intent. Increasing the number of countries endowed with veto power is hardly the way to restore credibility and accountability. Enlargement cannot happen at the expense of effectiveness. On the other hand, increasing the number of permanent members without veto power would be merely cosmetic and frivolous.

The habit of expanded informal consultations is just one demonstration of how the work of the Security Council depends on the paramount influence of permanent members — transparency and structural composition are closely related. This is why reform has to move forward, not selectively but as a common package. Elected members are hardly the ones to benefit from such opaque working methods. That trend favours instead those members who can threaten to use, or abuse, their veto. Therefore, adding new permanent members would increase the existing frustration of elected members, which feel marginalized from real decision-making when called on to ratify measures already prepared in restricted forums.

From the start of the exercise, Italy thought that the best solution would be to increase the number of non-permanent members only. The addition of a limited number of elected seats would make the Security Council more representative of the large regions of the world currently underrepresented, and allow a fair rotation for those countries who shoulder greater responsibilities in terms of financial resources, troops for peace operations led or authorized by the United Nations and political support for stabilization processes and peace agreements. After 10 years of heavy commitment to bringing peace to the Balkans, Italy's experience as a front-line country has taught us that the Security Council should more closely involve countries whose interests are especially affected, as described in Article 31 of the Charter. The key to making progress in the Security Council reform process lies in the greater involvement of non-members, as well as increased interaction with other United Nations and international bodies.

The recent progress in the Security Council's practices and operations leads us to suggest that we should all consider the regional dimension of the reform process. What is the meaning of equitable regional representation in the twenty-first century? The Security Council, for example, is working increasingly in close contact with representatives of the European Union on issues of conflict prevention and peace-building. With the development of European crisis-management capabilities, including a military rapid reaction force, relations between the European Union and the United Nations are set to grow significantly in the area of peacekeeping and conflict resolution, with modalities of interaction between the European Union and the Security Council also increasing in the definition of mandates. This has begun to happen in several regional crises, not only in Europe — in areas

such as the Balkans, as attested to by the recent resolution 1371 (2001) on The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia — but also in Africa and the Middle East, as recognized in the Security Council's press statement issued last Friday. In all these cases the Security Council welcomes and supports the efforts of the European Union to promote peace and stability.

Italy is a strong supporter of European Union efforts to better coordinate its common foreign and security policy, including in the Security Council. The repeated calls for strengthening the voice of Europe in international forums significantly narrow the margins for national policy differences. Even in some influential non-European quarters, the call has been issued for Europeans to work out a more reasonable system of representation among themselves. This is consistent with the position Italy has staunchly maintained on the issue of Security Council expansion. We will continue to work constructively in the only appropriate forum, the Open-ended Working Group, towards the reform inspired by the above criteria, and we appreciate that a growing number of countries share this approach.

Mr. Hughes (New Zealand): We are pleased to see once again the long list of speakers inscribed for this item. While our attention in the weeks following the events of 11 September has perhaps been largely focused elsewhere, as others have remarked previously, the Security Council's leading role in the international effort to stamp out terrorism underlines the importance of the issues we are discussing today.

Good progress was made in the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform during the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I would like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. President, Mr. Harri Holkeri, and the two Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, Ambassadors Thorsteinn Ingólfsson and John de Saram, for their tireless efforts. The General Assembly has in particular welcomed the progress achieved during the fifty-fifth session in the consideration of the issues dealing with the Council's working methods, where provisional agreement has been recorded on a large number of points. We need to keep building on this, and under your leadership, Mr. President, I am sure we will.

Like many others, we were pleased to see members of the Security Council, for the second year in a row, meet with the Open-ended Working Group to discuss steps taken by the Council to promote greater openness and transparency. This proved to be one of the most substantive meetings of the Working Group during the fifty-fifth session. We hope that the practice of Council members being invited to meet with the Working Group will continue during this session. There may indeed be other avenues by which we can promote constructive synergies between the Council and the Open-ended Working Group. For example, would it be possible for members of the Council's working group on documentation and procedure to come to the Open-ended Working Group next year to provide a briefing on their work programme, given the overlapping interests that we share?

There could also be merit, perhaps, in the Council's Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations entering into a dialogue with the Open-ended Working Group on issues of common concern — for example, how to ensure the greater involvement of troop contributors in decisions affecting the use of their contingents on peacekeeping operations.

During the past year, the Secretariat also made a valuable contribution to the Open-ended Working Group's understanding of how the Council's informal consultations are serviced. It was of considerable interest to many delegations to learn that the Secretariat does in fact keep records of these consultations. How these notes are stored and the regulations governing access to them will be matters that delegations will surely wish to pursue during the session ahead.

While the General Assembly was able to note the good progress made on issues dealing with the Council's working methods, it was also obliged to record that substantial differences of view remained on other issues. An area of central concern continues to be the veto. As a founding Member of the Organization, New Zealand was opposed to the veto, and we still are. The reluctance of the permanent members to countenance any curtailment of this power is not helping the reform process. We also believe that extending the veto power to any other Member States would not be consistent with the wishes of the majority. The issues posed by the veto are very difficult, and it is hard to see any way around them. So long as a small number of Member States insist on acquiring the veto power for themselves, progress towards enlargement is likely to remain stalled.

As for the issue of equitable representation more broadly, we continue to think that the time is fast approaching for a complete overhaul of the anachronistic, and in many cases dysfunctional, regional groups. We believe that reform in this area could contribute to bringing the Council's representativeness into line with the modern world.

Finally, I would like to say a few words about the idea of "periodic review", which continues to be part of the Open-ended Working Group's agenda. New Zealand is certainly not opposed to the idea of a future review of any arrangements which might eventually be agreed as an outcome of the current reform process. Indeed, we could be said to have been engaged in a review of previously agreed arrangements for these past eight years or so in the Open-ended Working Group.

But when it comes to the question of the possible extension of the veto, there is little doubt that the significance of the promise of a future review is essentially psychological. As the distinguished German jurist Bruno Simma noted in his landmark commentary on the Charter of the United Nations, the review concept was a major factor in overcoming the resistance of many smaller and medium-sized countries to the veto at San Francisco. To quote Professor Simma, "the prospect of a review conference in the foreseeable future, when the cards would be reshuffled, gave them consolation and hope". Well, I think we can be forgiven for not being so naïve again 56 years later.

The Millennium Summit last year provided us with a mandate to intensify our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. Despite the continuing obstacle posed by the veto, we believe the Open-ended Working Group has once again shown its worth over the past year and remains the appropriate forum for discussion of this item. As we said last year, we believe the broad outline of a reform package is discernible. The Open-ended Working Group's key characteristics of inclusiveness and transparency will ensure that the reform package which will eventually be arrived at will have general agreement and will be sustainable. Anything less would risk doing grave harm to the United Nations.

Mr. Listre (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The reform of the Security Council is one of the most complex and politically sensitive issues facing the Organization. Its outcome will without any doubt affect the system of collective security. That is why the solution we arrive at must be acceptable to all — that is to say, it must be reached by consensus without artificial deadlines or divisions. Otherwise, the reform will lack the necessary political legitimacy; or what is more, it will worsen the crisis of legitimacy that currently affects the Security Council. In this context, we are convinced that the Working Group established by the General Assembly remains the right forum to achieve this purpose. We therefore reiterate our commitment to work actively and constructively until we reach a general agreement on each and every item in the mandate of the Working Group.

The vast majority of delegations want a more democratic, representative and transparent Security Council — one that is better prepared to face the security challenges of the twenty-first century. Nonetheless, we have not yet made enough progress, particularly on issues related to the veto and to the expansion of the membership of the Council. Allow me to share some thoughts on the reasons for this delay.

The veto is an institution at variance with the principle of the sovereign equality of States and in flagrant contradiction with the democratic principles that the Council itself promotes in the settlement of disputes under its consideration. From the many debates held over the years, it is clear that the overwhelming majority of States want the elimination of the veto or, at the very minimum, its restriction. Only a very small minority remains attached to maximalist positions and rejects any modification of the veto whatsoever. That same minority states that, since the end of the cold war, the veto has seldom been used; that the question of the veto is not an important one at this stage of the reform process; and that we can therefore deal with it later. But why, then, if the question of the veto is so irrelevant, is there such tremendous resistance to changing it?

From our recent experience in the Security Council, we have learned that, even though the veto has not been used very much in recent years, the threat of its use — the so-called pocket veto — has had almost the same counterproductive effects as the veto itself. The "pocket veto" is used more frequently than the permanent members would like to admit. On more than one occasion, the negotiation of a draft resolution has been aborted or delayed, or the text changed substantially, because of the mere threat of a veto.

Obviously, Argentina is clearly against the veto. We think that it is necessary to limit its scope, as the first step towards its eventual elimination. For the time being, a reasonable limitation of the veto may be to restrict its application exclusively to Chapter VII issues, in which case the permanent members would have to explain to the General Assembly their reasons for having cast the veto. In our opinion, these limitations must be established through amendments to the Charter. A political commitment is not enough of a legal guarantee. Even a unilateral legal declaration cannot prevail over the principle of the supremacy of Charter provisions, in accordance with Article 103.

We have said that the reform of the Council is a package deal, to be taken as a whole. We must therefore not encourage any artificial division of proposals, such as postponing the question of the veto to a later stage and concentrating now on increasing the membership alone. Both issues are inseparably linked, and we deem it unacceptable that an issue of such importance as the veto, over which there is general agreement, should be isolated from the rest of the issues concerning reform.

But how it is possible to make a decision on increasing the membership of an organ as politically important as the Security Council without a previous agreement on the decision-making process of that organ? That is why we should bear in mind that the real reason for the delay in the Working Group is clear. The delay is due to an obstructionist minority that is opposed to any restriction of the veto, and not to the vast majority of States that want a more democratic Security Council. If certain Members are not ready to admit that, under present historical circumstances, there is no room for the arrangements of 1945, reform, I fear, will continue to be delayed.

We believe that the purpose of the reform is to allow for greater participation by all Member States. It would be anachronistic if, in the twenty-first century, we were to multiply privileges and discriminations that only the exceptional circumstances of the Second World War could have justified. That is why we believe that we must not perpetuate the inequalities of the past by establishing new permanent seats following the model of 1945. That would mean that we would have members that do not need to be elected by the General Assembly to serve in the Council; members that are not accountable to the rest of the membership; and members that enjoy the privilege of veto. An increase in the permanent membership would exacerbate existing imbalances and would run counter to the right of every Member to elect, and be elected, to participate in the system of collective security.

After eight years of debate, it is clear that existing differences on the expansion of the membership of the Council are mainly related to an increase in the category of permanent members. There is no doubt that this is closely connected with the question of the veto. So far, we have not heard any proposals on an increase in the category of permanent members that are not at variance with the democratic principles supported by its sponsors in their own legal systems and with the democratic principles that the Security Council encourages for the settlement of the conflicts under its consideration. Frankly, we fail to see how a less democratic Security Council could more legitimately ask more democracy of the rest of the world.

That is why, after having heard all the proposals made in the last eight years, and taking account of existing difficulties in, and the dynamics of, the present international situation, Argentina supports an increase in the category of non-permanent members only — elected members, that is. In our opinion, non-permanent members must continue to be elected according to the criteria set out in Article 23, paragraph 1, of the Charter: their contribution to international peace and security, and the principle of equitable geographical distribution. We think that it is for the regional groups to decide on the allocation of the new non-permanent seats created as a consequence of Council reform. This procedure has worked well in the past and must be retained.

Whatever reform takes place, it must be based on transparency and democratic principles. The Security Council asks for greater democracy from the majority of countries on its agenda. Therefore, the Council should start by applying this principle to itself and fight against the lack of democracy not only in its composition but also in its procedures.

Argentina has a long tradition of supporting the reform of the working methods of the Council. In 1994, together with New Zealand, we promoted a process to formalize a consultation mechanism between the Council and troop-contributing countries. In February 2000, on the basis of an Argentine initiative and during the Argentine presidency, the Council adopted a note by the President of the Council (S/2000/155) that

formalized the Argentine proposal that newly elected Council members should be invited to observe the Council's informal consultations for a period of one month immediately preceding their term of membership.

We are not going to elaborate further now on the working methods of the Security Council. We had a chance to express our opinion on the issue a few days ago, when we spoke on the report of the Security Council. But I would like to make the following points.

All of the delegations that participated in that debate clearly indicated their dissatisfaction with the Council's report. The Security Council cannot remain indifferent to this, lest it deepen its isolation from the rest of the membership. Curiously, none of the permanent members participated in that very interesting debate. We want to reiterate that the report must be substantive and analytical; it cannot be a compendium of previously published documents. The report of the Secretary-General may provide useful guidelines here.

At the same time, we want to state our satisfaction at the fact that the Council has been adopting more transparent practices in recent times. Still, there is a long way to go. That is why we believe that the start of informal contacts between the Security Council's working group on documentation and procedures and the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform will make a positive contribution to improving the Council's working methods.

The events of 11 September reminded us all, in an extraordinarily cruel and painful manner, of how important it is for the international community to stand united to meet decisively and effectively the new threats to international peace and security that have emerged. The Security Council has an essential role to play in this fight.

Therefore, today more than ever, it is crucial to abandon extreme positions and archaic privileges, which are contrary to the progress of history and international relations. Together, we must find rational solutions based on consensus. We need a Security Council more suited to the twenty-first century than to the nineteenth. That is to say, we need a more representative, transparent, accountable and democratic Security Council. Never the opposite.

Mr. Ling (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Belarus delegation would like to start by saying that despite the difficulty of the task facing us, some positive efforts have been achieved in the Open-ended Working Group on the issue of equitable representation on the Security Council, increasing its membership and other related matters.

Although no impressive results were achieved, a total of 20 meetings over five sessions have allowed us to study and narrow differences on such issues as Council's working methods, the transparency of its work, decision-making within the Security Council, including the right of veto, and increasing the membership of the Council. Also, in many ways, we have been able to consolidate the views of States on these issues. A useful innovation in our view was the 13 June 2000 special meeting with Ambassador Chowdhury of Bangladesh, at that time presiding over the Security Council, and two other Council members, Ambassador Jeremy Greenstock of the United Kingdom and Ambassador Alfonso Valdivieso of Colombia, in which they told us of the kind of steps being taken in the Security Council to achieve more openness and transparency in Council procedures. We fully agree with the view that such meetings of the Working Group, in which members of the Council participate with an interactive exchange of views on issues with the members of the Group, should be continued in the future.

We also agree that the progress achieved by the Council in enhancing the transparency and effectiveness of its work should be further built upon. Our approach is that Council reforms should be based not on temporary, transient processes and trends, but on those reflecting stable new patterns that have emerged in the world of international politics.

The position of the Republic of Belarus on the issue of Security Council reform has already been distributed as an official document at the General Assembly. It covers the three basic components of the process: number and make-up of Council membership, decision-making processes and working methods. Of course, these are all organically linked, and we recognize the importance of all aspects of this process, starting with the Council's working methods and moving on through efforts to increase the membership primarily by removing the imbalance in regional representation and providing equitable geographical distribution with respect to the regional groups.

We also agree that we need a gradual codification of the rules for use of the right of veto, necessarily taking into account the Council's powers under the Charter, including those powers granted under Chapter VII. It is also very important that we reach consensus on this, taking into account the view of the five permanent members.

We are also glad to see a number of useful changes in the Council's methods of work such as a general increase in the number of open meetings, informational briefings and consultations with troop-contributing countries, the practice of giving the floor to non-members of the Security Council in exploratory discussions, the system of interactive meetings with representatives of the Secretary-General, his special envoys, or the Secretary-General himself, the ability to ask questions in a question-and-answer format, the introduction of the atmosphere of informal consultations into open meetings that include non-members of the Council, and so forth.

Belarus welcomes further measures allowing countries that are not members of the Council to participate more actively in discussing the most important issues, both at the discussion stage and at the decision-making stage, as well.

From our point of view, it is important that we should not limit the discussion of the most burning problems to just Council members. We should discuss them in a wider forum, open to all Member States, as happened, for instance, when, here in this hall, we discussed measures to eliminate international terrorism and other such burning issues.

When we take part in open meetings of the Security Council and put forward Belarus's view on these issues, we, like other Member States that actively put forward their own positions, try during the course of discussion, including the exploratory discussions, not only to express our own vision of the reasons why problems have arisen and how to tackle them. We are also keen, wherever possible, to be a part of the collective search for finding ways to resolve crisis situations. We are happy when our position, our vision and our modest efforts to be useful are helpful in decision-making.

The Republic of Belarus has always been in favour of a stable system for international security. We have always been an active advocate for achieving this goal. As we see it, our main task is to maximize room for cooperation and minimize room for rivalry. We continue to support the Working Group's recommendation in its current report to continue the work and progress that has been achieved since the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly. We are confident that under your skilful guidance, Mr. President, and based on your rich diplomatic experience and qualities, the Working Group will continue to be active. We will continue in the future working as hard as possible to make our contribution to the joint effort to implement Security Council reform.

Mr. Botnaru (Republic of Moldova), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. Kastrup (Germany): We are meeting once again today to discuss the important issue of Security Council reform and to assess the work of the Open-ended Working Group.

I would like to begin by thanking Harri Holkeri, President of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, who, in his capacity as Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, really displayed untiring efforts to achieve progress in our common goal of making the Security Council more representative and equitable.

We welcome your desire, Mr. President, to be the new Chairman of the Working Group, and we wish you all the best in your efforts to accelerate the reform process. We appreciate your intention, as you aptly put it, to move forward the discussions on Security Council reform, with the goal of having a more representative, transparent and effective Security Council. We stand ready to support you in this endeavour.

The Open-ended Working Group has, in eight years of deliberations, failed to achieve consensus on a substantial reform package. We have, however, witnessed a few rather welcome changes in the working methods of the Security Council that have resulted in somewhat enhanced transparency and certain additional openness of the Council towards the larger membership.

Formal, public and private meetings have been held more frequently. According to this year's report of the Security Council to the General Assembly, there were 173 formal meetings, as compared to 185 consultations of the whole. Allowing non-members of the Council to participate in the meetings, whenever

possible, is an important factor in increasing acceptance of the Council's work and decisions.

The presidency of the Security Council now briefs, on a quite regular basis, non-members of the Council immediately after the Council's deliberations. These briefings, by now, have become a well-established practice. We encourage all future Council presidencies to continue in this fashion.

Furthermore, as of August 2001, the Security Council has held several private meetings with troop-contributing countries. These meetings, followed more recently by a summarized report prepared by the Security Council presidency, constitute an important step forward in implementing resolution 1353 (2001). We strongly support this practice. We also know that there is still room for improvement. Troop-contributing countries are absolutely essential to any United Nations peacekeeping effort. It increases the credibility of Security Council decisions when they can meet officially and on an equal footing with the members of the Security Council, to have an open exchange of views, voice their particular concerns and contribute their experience and proposals.

Some of these positive developments in the working methods of the Council came, in fact, in the wake of proposals we had made to achieve greater transparency in the work of the Council. While we welcome these developments, we would like to see further progress. Ad hoc missions of the Security Council to crisis regions are a case in point. Subsequent information for the general membership about the findings of such missions, a written report circulated as a United Nations document and a meeting to discuss the findings of the mission, with active participation of non-members in the Council's discussion, would be a further step towards greater transparency of the Council's work.

Concerning the central task of the Open-ended Working Group, I have to state that we are nowhere near a solution to the ever-important issue of equitable representation and increase in the Council's membership and of related matters such as the veto.

I therefore reiterate our reform proposals that come under the heading representation, accountability, democratization and transparency. We need a more representative Council, and therefore an increase in the number of seats in both categories. We need a more accountable Council, and therefore a review process. We need reform with regard to the veto to make the Council more democratic. Lastly, we need further reform of the working methods to make the Council more transparent.

We welcome the initiative taken by Ambassador Holkeri, in his capacity as President of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, to ask Member States for their assistance in exploring the best ways to implement the Millennium Declaration's mandate to reform the Security Council.

Everybody should realize that the Millennium Declaration reflects the political determination of the Member States to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council. In summarizing the replies received from Foreign Ministers, Ambassador Holkeri pointed out that there is a common recognition that the Council needs to reflect the realities of the twenty-first century to better serve peace and security. We share Ambassador Holkeri's assessment that presently the crucial question is how to fulfil the Summit mandate and how to move forward, after eight years of discussions, to negotiations. The question is, how can we move forward?

Harri Holkeri highlighted several suggestions he received from Member States. The first suggestion was to move the discussion to a higher political level, a special session or a high-level meeting in order to generate sufficient political will to reach general agreement on reform. The second suggestion was to maintain the overall goal of comprehensive Security Council reform while moving forward step by step, as in the context of General Assembly reform.

We believe that a step-by-step approach, while useful with regard to a reform of the working methods of the Council, when applied to the representation on the Council, may not lead to truly meaningful reform.

In our view, the next step could be the development of alternative reform models based on the different positions expressed by Member States. We find that annex XIII of the Working Group's report provides a very useful basis in this respect. By now, all proposals have been submitted.

Summarizing and consolidating the various reform proposals might enable us to finally embark on meaningful Security Council reform. We are ready at any time to elaborate and submit reform proposals, in cooperation with the President of the General

Assembly and the Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group, so that the Millennium Declaration's obligations and intentions can be implemented.

As we all have learned painfully in recent weeks, today's world holds greater threats to international peace and security than most of us would have acknowledged only a few weeks ago. The United Nations is uniquely positioned to meet these challenges. The challenges to international peace and security naturally affect the significance of the work and the relevance of the United Nations Security Council.

By adopting resolutions 1368 (2001) and 1373 (2001), the Security Council acted swiftly and showed its determination to live up to its responsibility.

In the process, we have witnessed another new development in the work of the Council: the establishment of the Committee on Counter-Terrorism, which, unlike previous Security Council committees, is not a sanctions committee but one that relies on cooperation and assistance in the implementation of resolution 1373 (2001).

The Chairman of the newly established Committee on Counter-Terrorism has repeatedly stressed that, in fulfilling the Committee's mandate, he will work in close cooperation with Member States. He stated that transparency and openness will be among the key features of the Committee on Counter-Terrorism. We fully support this approach. It is the only approach that will be conducive to an effective implementation of the Security Council's recent decision on terrorism. We should like to see transparency and openness as the guiding principles of the Council's work in general.

The Security Council's composition still reflects a time when the international political order was quite different from what it is today. Broader coalitions need to be built, and multilateral forums have to be strengthened, which includes a reform of the United Nations and its principal organs, not least of all the Security Council. Our proposals for reform remain on the table, and we are more than willing to cooperate with Member States in finding agreement on a reform that reflects today's realities and enables the United Nations and its bodies to live up to its increased responsibilities.

We have to translate the political will expressed in the Millennium Declaration into a constructive approach to Security Council reform. To conclude, I would like to quote from the final address of the President of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, who stated on 10 September 2001 that "the United Nations cannot afford to fail in the reform of the Security Council". I could not agree more.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil): Let me start by thanking the President of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, Harri Holkeri, together with Ambassador de Saram of Sri Lanka and Ambassador Ingólfsson of Iceland for their invaluable efforts in leading our discussions on this item during the past year.

I want to pledge our full cooperation, through you, Sir, to the President of this Assembly, as he assumes, among so many other important responsibilities, that of guiding us in carrying out this task.

It is extremely important that the Security Council be perceived as a body that enjoys unquestionable legitimacy and authority. In fact, this is the common ground and the main thrust behind our endeavours to reform the Security Council.

This session of the General Assembly has begun at a time of unprecedented challenge to the Organization. In critical times such as these, the United Nations, especially the Security Council, is called upon to fully exercise its responsibilities. The new security threats faced by the international community highlight once again the fact that the world today is quite different from that of 56 years ago. And this makes even more eloquent the case for a comprehensive reform of the Security Council so as to make it more representative, effective and legitimate.

The Security Council must be made more accountable to the general membership, its methods of work must provide for greater transparency and participation, and its composition must be adapted so as to better reflect present political realities and the enhanced role of developing countries in world affairs. Any meaningful reform package must, therefore, necessarily include the enlargement of the Council's membership and improvement of its methods of work.

Our positions are well known on this matter. Briefly stated, Brazil favours an enlargement in the number of both permanent and non-permanent

members of the Security Council, increasing the total number of members to the mid-twenties. We believe that equitable representation in the Council can be achieved only if new permanent seats are allocated to both developed and developing countries.

A curtailment of the veto with a view to its gradual elimination is necessary. As a first step, the veto should be strictly limited to matters covered by Chapter VII of the Charter. We also continue to believe that equitable representation in the Security Council requires that there should be no distinction between new permanent members and the current ones. These are Brazil's views on cluster I issues.

On cluster II issues, we commend the increasing tendency of the Security Council to be more transparent and inclusive in its procedures. Private meetings, open briefings, public debates and the practice of daily briefings help bring the work of the Council closer to the general membership. We welcome the practice of public wrap-up sessions and believe that they should serve as an opportunity, particularly for the outgoing President of the Council, to make a personal assessment of the work accomplished.

Notwithstanding these positive developments, two issues continue to elude consensus with respect to the Council's working methods. The first issue relates to the need for the Council to conduct a greater amount of its actual business in open sessions. The Council continues to conduct most of its business in closed informal consultations. We all recognize that "in camera" meetings are necessary and useful. Very often, however, actual decisions are taken during informal consultations of the whole. In these cases, informal consultations cannot be treated as "non-existent" sessions of the Council, totally veiled or locked away from the general membership.

We believe that informal consultations should be formally treated as closed private meetings of the Council. Otherwise, they should be somehow institutionalized in order to ensure that appropriate records of the decisions are kept and that the provisions of Articles 31 and 32 of the Charter are not circumvented in the work of the Council, thus allowing for appropriate access and participation by affected States.

The second issue that eludes consensus relates to the need to improve the way the Security Council interacts with the General Assembly and other main bodies of the Organization. The recent debate on the report of the Security Council was illuminating in this respect. For the sake of brevity, I will not repeat here the comments and suggestions my delegation made with respect to the format and content of the report. Let me, nevertheless, stress the point that interaction between the Council and the General Assembly should be more fluid and not confined to a one-day debate of the annual report.

We see, for instance, that there is fertile ground for the Council to produce focused, analytical special reports on a variety of issues, such as the protection of civilians, peace-building, cooperation with troop-contributing countries, difficulties encountered in the implementation of sanction regimes and efforts to combat international terrorism. We also believe that there should be greater financial accountability of the Security Council in the sense that the wider membership is entitled to receive more information, and in a more timely manner, on the budgetary implications of decisions taken by the Council.

The Millennium Summit made an urgent call for renewed efforts to achieve comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. The previous President of the General Assembly took the timely initiative of consulting with the Foreign Ministers of all Members States on practical means to move this process forward and meet the mandate of the Millennium Summit. We share his assessment that while some progress has been made in the working methods of the Council, the main issues remain open.

After eight years of continuous discussions, we share a deep sense of frustration with the slow pace of progress achieved in the activities of the Open-ended Working Group. As we approach this challenge again, we cannot afford to engage in yet another round of general discussions. The issues have already been identified. They have been fully discussed, and we know where the difficulties lie.

In resolution 53/30, the General Assembly rightfully set a very high standard for decisions pertaining to the reform of the Security Council. We must now start preparing the ground for the political decisions involved, and it is inevitable that at a certain point we will need to test which proposals and ideas can meet the requirement set by the General Assembly. In this respect, we remain convinced that our discussions over the past eight years have shown that

there is a substantial body of support for the expansion of the Security Council in both categories of members, for the assignment of new permanent seats to both developed and developing countries and for a movement towards gradual elimination of the veto.

In his remarks to the concluding session of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, President Holkeri summarized the replies received from our Foreign Ministers on possible avenues to advance this process. One of the suggestions picked up by Mr. Holkeri was that Governments may want to approach this shared goal by moving step by step. We believe that this is exactly what we were doing when we decided, for instance, on the issue of the majority required for decisions relating to the reform of the Security Council. The next logical step would be to reach agreement on the size of a reformed Council and build blocks from there so that a comprehensive package of reform can be designed in the foreseeable future.

Brazil, for its part, remains committed to continue to work constructively with all delegations in the search for a resolution of these outstanding issues. We are confident, Mr. President, that your leadership and keen sense of diplomacy will enable us to move ahead in this common goal of all Member States. You may be assured of our full cooperation.

Mr. Balestra (San Marino): First of all, I wish to associate myself with the previous speakers in thanking President Holkeri and the two co-chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group, Ambassadors Ingólfsson and de Saram, for the excellent work done this past year. I am certain that the next cycle of negotiations under the skilled leadership of the current President will be extremely fruitful.

I will try to be brief and pragmatic, without reiterating positions already expressed before. In some previous statements, we heard complaints by certain delegations about the fact that the Open-ended Working Group has not yet obtained results, notwithstanding its eight years of intense activity. There is here an implicit complaint, which, in my view, is directed at a group of countries whose only fault is to oppose the modalities and terms of a reform of the Security Council proposed and sought by another group of countries. In other words, we have not obtained results, simply because to adopt now a decision on the enlargement of the Security Council would be premature and hasty. The lack of results in the reforms of the Security Council cannot be attributed only to one group of countries. Rather, we share a common responsibility for it.

The position of my country is well known: we favour the increase of non-permanent seats only. The extension of the privileges of the permanent members to other countries would mean to create additional injustice and further discrimination. Moreover, it would limit the General Assembly's power to elect the candidates of its choice on the basis of the contribution of each country to the work of the Organization. This limitation on the powers of the General Assembly becomes even more significant if we consider that 81 countries — a little less than half of the membership of the United Nations — have never been members of the Security Council, and the only contribution they can make to its work is by democratically electing their representatives to that organ.

My delegation is convinced that, for the time being, the only enlargement possible is in the non-permanent category. Insisting on blocking this kind of enlargement goes against the interests of many countries, which belong to all geographical areas and could have had the opportunity during the past eight years to participate actively as non-permanent members in an enlarged Security Council.

If the debate in the Working Group were to be re-opened on the question of the increase in the permanent members category, San Marino believes that the core of the enlargement lies in the question of the veto — its extension to the new permanent members, its limitation in the sphere of application and its possible curtailment. We will also have to face the question of the proportion between the rights and duties of the possible new permanent members, and go back to the question of the criteria to be applied to select them. The definition of those points is crucial for an equitable and democratic reform.

Anyhow, as it has already been stated by other delegations, these past eight years have not been sterile. We can clearly detect improvements brought about in the methods of work and in the procedures of the Security Council — improvements that we must surely attribute to the activities of the Working Group.

The Republic of San Marino will continue to follow this subject with extreme interest and will take active part in the future debate in the Working Group,

because the Group is, and must continue to be, the only forum for discussion of this important issue.

Mr. Estévez-López (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): In ordinary times, our debate on Security Council reform is, to paraphrase the great Colombian writer, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, a chronicle of a foretold debate. All those who have followed the course of our discussions on this topic, which now appears for the eighth time on our annual agenda, know, beforehand, what everyone else will have to say on the matter. And we will once more ascertain that the differences between us are so daunting that they simply paralyse any action. For that reason, almost all astute observers of our Organization predict that the reform of the Security Council is an undertaking that will take years, if not decades. And, up to now, those observers have been right. Given the reluctance of some States to alter the status quo — because of the privileges it provides them — and the enormous task of bridging so many opposing positions, inertia prevails and nothing happens.

However, these are not ordinary times. The events of 11 September not only shook our collective conscience and dignity, but represented a challenge to the United Nations. In some respects, the Organization has risen to the occasion. I am not referring so much to the swiftness with which both the Security Council and the General Assembly reacted, within 24 hours, with their respective resolutions — although that, too, is noteworthy. More important, to my mind, is the fact that those events were followed by responses compatible with multilateral arrangements and the Charter of the United Nations, instead of by unilateral responses bypassing the United Nations. This is another way of saying that, at least at the outset, multilateralism prevailed over unilateralism and we believe that this, in principle, is a positive result.

At another level, however, those events laid bare the main shortcomings of our system of governance, especially regarding the links between the United Nations main organs and the proper role each has to play. In this respect, it will be recalled that, when we examined the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly only two weeks ago, we heard the lamentations of many delegations regarding the enormous gulf that divides the main organs of the United Nations. It would appear that the Security Council feels no need to offer accountability to the General Assembly, even in its most formal expression. At the same time, however, the Security Council adopted a far-reaching resolution — I am referring, of course, to resolution 1373 (2001) — which contains commitments that are binding on all Member States. How are we to reconcile these two facts? How can we ensure that the wider membership will comply with that resolution by conviction, rather than by imposition? In other words, how can we endow the actions of the Security Council with greater legitimacy at the moment when such far-reaching decisions are adopted?

We know the generic answers to these questions. We need a more representative Council that reflects today's world, rather than that of 1945; a Council which acts with greater transparency; and a Council with greater accountability, willing at the very least to inform the wider membership on whose behalf it acts. After 11 September, however, those concepts have acquired a whole new meaning. They have become imperatives for the good governance of this Organization.

There are two types of decisions that can be taken to move in that direction. First, more avenues of communication must be built between the Security Council and the General Assembly. The same can be said regarding the Economic and Social Council. In fact, the process of consultations begun by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee created by resolution 1373 (2001), is a positive step. It opens a two-way channel of communication between both organs, which is an eminently healthy development. Much more needs to be done, however.

Secondly, we must abandon the culture that has taken root in the Organization, which holds that reform of the Security Council is such a daunting task that it is best not even to try it. We, on the other hand, believe in the old axiom that "where there is a will, there is a way". The first to abandon this culture must be the permanent members themselves, since they are the ones that should be the most interested in ensuring that decisions of the Security Council are well received by the wider membership.

This is not the place to expound on concrete proposals on the various parameters that make up our age-old debate on this matter. It is clear, however, that the decision-making process of the Council must reflect reality. This will lead to some type of weighted

voting that, whether we like it or not, will probably include endowing the most influential countries with the ability to impede decisions with which they disagree. It is equally clear, however, that, due to the force of circumstances, the time has come to revisit the composition of the Council in order to provide it with greater representativeness, transparency and accountability.

Let us therefore abandon our dialogue of the deaf and the mute and make an effort to address Security Council reform in the serious and committed manner that present circumstances warrant and as our heads of State instructed us to do in the Millennium Declaration. It is true that it will be difficult, but by no means impossible. Let us then do it. The future of the United Nations depends upon it.

Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine): I would like to express our appreciation for the constructive contribution to the Security Council reform issues made by Mr. Han's predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland, as the Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group, and by his two Vice-Chairmen, Ambassadors Ingólfsson of Iceland and de Saram of Sri Lanka, for their excellent work and guidance in the Working Group this past session. I would also like to extend our gratitude to them for the preparation of the report of the Working Group.

Ukraine strongly believes that reform of the Security Council remains one of the most fundamental and urgent issues on the United Nations agenda. In the Millennium Declaration, the heads of State and Government reaffirmed their commitment to spare no effort in making the United Nations a more effective instrument for pursuing a prosperous, just and peaceful world. In this regard, they stressed in particular the resolve to intensify their efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the Council, as the main United Nations body entrusted with the indispensable responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, should bring to its work new capacities and new perspectives to meet the challenges of the new century. At the same time, Ukraine shares the disappointment over the little progress that has been achieved with regard to the reform, despite the continuous and strenuous efforts of the majority of Member States. Though some provisional agreements were recorded at the last session on a number of issues dealing specifically with the working methods of the Security Council, it is regrettable that the Group was unable to reach an agreement on substantive issues of the Council's reform.

This reveals the difficulty of our task and the significance of the interests involved. However, we should not be discouraged by this fact. Let us not forget that it took quite a while to accomplish the 1965 reform, which in fact created the present structure of the Council. The General Assembly's mandate to the Working Group is clear: to seek general agreement that grants legitimacy and credibility to the exercise of reform. Therefore, we believe that the current stalemate in the Working Group could be overcome if a greater degree of flexibility were shown by all parties. What is really unacceptable to my delegation and, I believe, to the majority of States Members of the United Nations is preserving the status quo in this issue. It is our sincere hope that, next year, the Group will pursue these goals with greater determination and will demonstrate a result-oriented approach.

I should like very briefly to reiterate the position of Ukraine on some key elements in this regard. First and foremost, the reform should be based on strict compliance with the norms and principles of the Charter. Ukraine believes that the enlarged Security Council should comprise between 24 and 26 seats. Both categories of membership — permanent and non-permanent — should be expanded. My country has repeatedly emphasized that those countries which are able and willing to take greater responsibility — including financial responsibility — in the maintenance of international peace and security, and which enjoy the necessary authority and support at both regional and global levels, should be able to receive the status of permanent members.

In this context, we recognize the willingness of Germany and Japan to assume the responsibilities of permanent members. Accordingly, the Council's enlargement, through the addition of new seats in both categories for developing countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, would better reflect the changed international political and economic landscape. At the same time, the expansion of the category of non-permanent membership must necessarily include an additional seat for the Eastern European Group, the membership of which has more than doubled during the last decade.

The veto remains at the heart of the problem of Council reform and is clearly one of the most controversial issues we have to deal with. Ukraine strongly believes that, given present political realities, the institution of the veto, at least in its present form, is obsolete and unjustified. Ukraine is convinced that the existence of the veto right is one of the major reasons why the Council finds itself frequently prevented from discharging its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. We would therefore like to join all those delegations that have called for the curtailment of the scope and application of the veto, with a view to its subsequent elimination.

We note with satisfaction that considerable progress was made in the area of the working methods of the Council — for example, in holding meetings in a public format and in enhancing transparency — as has already been underlined by a number of delegations. We also welcome the increase in the number of public debates and private meetings of the Council, which provide a real opportunity for non-members to make useful contributions. We also would like to note the increased interaction between the Open-ended Working Group and the Council itself. The very fact that these and other improvements in the working methods of the Council are being gradually introduced into its practices, before they are institutionalized by the Working Group, proves that deliberations within the Group could be effectively supplemented by the innovative and proactive approach of members of the Council. We should continue our efforts to ensure that this practice can become a rule rather than an exception.

Finally, we are fully confident that under the skilful guidance of the President of the General Assembly the Working Group will continue to seek ways to advance our work on Council reform. We believe that the President will bring further dynamism to its activities, and in that undertaking he can count on my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Ms. Rasi (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries — Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Finland.

The terrorist attacks on 11 September have profoundly affected our sense of security, both as Member States and as individuals. They were a brutal intrusion into our open, democratic, tolerant and multicultural societies. Fear and insecurity were globalized overnight. The Security Council, as the body primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, demonstrated resolve and unity in the aftermath of the attacks. In a unique manner, the United Nations quickly brought about the widest possible coalition to fight against terrorism. Hopefully, this sense of unity will also help us to create a new era of cooperation between Member States in other fields, too, including United Nations reforms.

The Nobel Peace Prize, awarded to the United Nations and its Secretary-General, gives the Organization the recognition it deserves for its efforts to create a safer and better world. At the same time, it raises expectations for an even more effective United Nations, not least with regard to the Security Council. In order for the Council to maintain its role and authority, and for its decisions to carry the necessary weight, it must better reflect the world of today.

Hopefully, the Nobel Peace Prize will give new impetus to the resolve of the heads of State or Government, expressed in the Millennium Declaration, to intensify efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects.

It has proved difficult to reach a consensus among the Member States on how to move forward. It is, however, widely recognized that enlargement is necessary in order to ensure better geographical representation in the Council and to strengthen the role of the developing countries. At the same time, it is essential to avoid reducing the efficiency of the Council.

Discussions on both the enlargement and the decision-making of the Security Council must continue with more vigour and determination so as to break the current impasse. We need to keep an open mind with regard to proposals that could contribute to making progress, focusing on a number of crucial issues with the aim of gaining the support of the broadest possible majority of the United Nations membership.

The veto remains a crucial issue in the functioning and decision-making of the Security Council. The practice of trying to achieve texts and resolutions that permit permanent members to abstain, rather than exercise their veto, represents a step in the right direction. This is an inclusive approach that demonstrates the seriousness with which that body deals with today's challenges, thereby contributing to

respect and support for the Security Council and its decisions. A difference of opinion can thereby be expressed without blocking the Security Council from taking necessary action.

Changes to the right of veto can be made on the basis of a common understanding among Member States without amendments to the Charter. The present permanent members would still have unique responsibility for the activities and decisions of the Security Council. More political will is needed for this to take place, and we welcome the active participation of the permanent members and their engagement in open and results-oriented discussions. The permanent members should limit the use of the veto. If the veto is nevertheless used, its use should be explained.

While enlargement remains the most crucial issue, matters related to transparency and openness should not be forgotten. Improvements in those fields would benefit all Member States with immediate effect, even if enlargement has eluded us for such a long time.

The Nordic countries acknowledge the progress made on improving the working methods of the Council. While we welcome the tendency towards more openness and regular consultations with non-members of the Council, in particular with troop-contributing countries, there is, however, further scope for improvements in this area.

With the able guidance of the President of the General Assembly, we hope that the Open-ended Working Group can make progress on reform of the Security Council. We must be able to show that the commitments made by our heads of State or Government can be fulfilled and that the United Nations is an organization that can renew itself and respond to the current challenges.

Mr. Ordzhonikidze (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The terrorist acts of 11 September presented the United Nations and its Security Council with tasks of unprecedented scale in the maintenance of international peace and security. In the present situation, the Security Council's ability to respond quickly and appropriately to new challenges to global peace is more important than ever. Under these circumstances, reform of the Security Council as an integral part of the broad process of United Nations renewal should ensure not only the preservation but also the strengthening of the Council's ability effectively to exercise its powers under the United Nations Charter.

Reform of that principal organ of the United Nations is entirely in the hands of the States Members of the Organization, which all have a stake in its success. In many respects, resolving this issue is crucial to the future role of the United Nations in world affairs and to enhancing the effectiveness of the Security Council as the body with primary Charter responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. That is why Russia has consistently favoured achieving the broadest possible agreement — or preferably consensus — on a possible formula for the enlargement of the Council. We hope that this approach is supported by an overwhelming majority of Member States.

In our view, the stated intention of participants in the Millennium Summit to intensify the process of negotiations on Security Council reform is in tune with that policy position. We advocate continuing the painstaking work aimed at bridging the significant differences that still exist among States, first of all on the key issue of the future composition of the Council.

Russia's position on the substance of the issue of Security Council reform is well known. As always, we remain open to constructive proposals concerning the categories of membership within which the Council should be enlarged.

The Council's existing decision-making procedure ensures an appropriate balance of the interests of its members and contributes to reaching consensus on issues under consideration; this is essential if the Council's work is to be effective. We continue to hold the firm and principled position that there should be no derogation from the prerogatives and powers of the current permanent members of the Council, including their right of veto. Unjustified criticism of the institution of the veto stirs up unnecessary emotions and in no way facilitates the achievement of desired agreement on the parameters of reform.

It is important to keep the Security Council as compact as possible to ensure needed efficiency and viability. We believe that priority should be given to determining the optimal makeup of the Council rather than to considering the quantitative aspects of its enlargement. We have repeatedly stressed that enlargement must embrace both developed and developing States. That is important if we are to ensure

that the Council's membership is balanced. Here, we consider India, for example, a strong and worthy candidate for permanent membership of the Security Council should it be decided to enlarge the Council in both categories. There are strong candidates in other regions as well.

I assure the Assembly that Russia will continue to participate constructively in the search for effective and broadly supported ways to reform the Security Council. We look forward to the broadest possible cooperation on this issue. Russia will continue to work actively in the Assembly's Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council, which we believe should remain the main United Nations forum on the subject. As always, the activities of the Group should be based upon agreed parameters, including the principle of consensus and the so-called package approach.

Security Council reform will be successful only if it results not in disagreement but in a greater rallying of States around that unique organ, which, on behalf of all States Members of the United Nations, bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace on Earth.

Mr. Khalid (Pakistan): I take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Han Seung-soo on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. We are confident that with his able guidance and diplomatic skills he will steer the work of the General Assembly to a successful conclusion. We also appreciate the dedication and commitment of the previous President, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland, in chairing the meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council, as well as the contribution made to that process by the representatives of Iceland and of Sri Lanka.

We have entered the ninth year since we started the debate on the item before us. Clearly, that is a long period of deliberations. Some might feel fatigued because of the time that has elapsed, but in view of the vast differences on the issue it is imperative that the matter not be dealt with in a hasty manner. Every one of us is aware that the question of Security Council reform encompasses issues that are both complex and of direct relevance to the sovereign equality of Member States. At stake are issues which cover all aspects of the Security Council, including its enlargement, decision-making, the question of the veto and the Council's working methods. There has been a general agreement among Member States that these issues are not only vital for the interests of Member States but also interlinked. Therefore, there is a need to handle these issues with great care, taking into account the objective realities and general interests of Member States.

The Open-ended Working Group established by the General Assembly has discussed all these issues in considerable detail. However, deep differences on them remain among the membership. A minority feels that simply according permanent status to a few Member States will be a panacea. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority rightly believes that Security Council reform must take into account the principle of sovereign equality of States and geographical distribution enabling the widest possible participation of Member States of the United Nations. We are thus faced with a situation in which a minority is trying to dictate the agenda on these issues with prime focus on its narrow interests.

There is another small group of new aspirants for the permanent membership that, in order to enhance their individual prestige, want to convince the world that their size or economic or industrial power qualifies them to acquire permanent membership of the Security Council. In our view, the general membership's trust and confidence in the Security Council can be reinforced only by strengthening its democratic, accountable and participatory character, not by creating new centres of power. We cannot grant a distinctive, different and elevated position to some over the others. Equity and representativity cannot be served by the creation of new centres of power and privilege.

The pretenders have employed a variety of arguments to justify their claim to exalted status on the Council. However, the real motive is their desire to join the present oligarchy, which is an anachronistic remnant of the Second World War. We would like to ask what holy purpose an increase in the number of permanent seats would serve. How are new permanent members going to contribute to the peace, security and development of the world? How are they going to promote the right of self-determination of oppressed

people, protect human rights or eradicate poverty? These are fundamental questions. The addition of more permanent members would make the Council neither more democratic, more representative, more transparent or more efficient. It would make it more undemocratic, unrepresentative and unresponsive to the concerns of the vast majority.

We have also been listening to the amazing argument which revolves around the economic or industrial prowess of some nations and their contribution to the United Nations as credentials for their candidature for that Hall of Fame. If industrial development is a criterion, how has it helped the world, especially the developing and least developed countries, to eradicate their poverty or solve their debt problems? Indeed, if contribution is the criterion, then most of the developing countries would be left with no role in the United Nations.

While there is absolutely no consensus on expanding the permanent category, there is a genuine demand for increasing the number of non-permanent seats in the Security Council. This demand does not arise out of an urge to buttress narrow interests or to gain super-Power or regional Power status; it arises out of simple statistics regarding the growth in the number of independent States since the mid-sixties. This demand would not hamper the work of the Security Council or snatch away the privileges of the few; it is derived from the fact that the present membership in the non-permanent category is too small to accommodate the number of candidatures presented for each term. On average, a Member State has to wait between 10 and 15 years to announce its candidature for Security Council membership. With the addition of new non-permanent seats, we would be encouraging the active participation of the vast majority of the United Nations membership, which comprises medium-sized and small States.

It is also the wish of the vast majority of Member States that the veto should be eliminated or, at the very least, that its use should be restricted to decisions under Chapter VII of the Charter. Let us analyse a bit what the veto has done to nations. In the heat of the cold war, this instrument of power was utilized on a partisan basis. It fed the power blocs. It was never intended to dispense justice to Member States. As a result, issues which are as old as the United Nations itself are still pending in the Security Council. Glaring examples of selective application of the veto power are the issues of Palestine and Kashmir. The veto power, instead of becoming an instrument of confidence and security for Member States, has in fact become a tool of intimidation and coercion. In the twenty-first century, with lofty slogans of globalization, promotion of peace, human rights, democracy, equality and justice, no justification remains for the veto to stay in the statutes of the United Nations. The issue of the veto, in our view, is intrinsically linked to the reform and expansion of the Security Council. Any attempt to separate the issue of the veto from enlargement would be self-serving. The veto forms an important element of the overall reform package, which should be carried out in all its aspects and in a comprehensive and inclusive manner, as mandated in the Millennium Declaration last year.

We have seen some positive trends in the area of working methods under cluster II issues. The Security Council has moved in the direction of adopting a mechanism for greater consultation and coordination between the Council members and troop-contributing countries. We welcome this move, but we feel that the Security Council has to do much more to institutionalize the triangular cooperation between itself, the Secretariat and the troop contributors to enhance the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping operations. We welcome the initiative to invite the Security Council members to brief the Open-ended Working Group on cluster II issues and hope that this interrelationship will be further strengthened.

Another recent innovation in Council meetings is open thematic debates. As we understand it, this practice was introduced to enable Member States to express their views on any given theme or issue, which then would be taken into account by the Security Council at the time of its decision-making. In reality, members of the Council generally finalize a draft resolution or presidential statement in advance of an open meeting. The script is already agreed upon, only to be subsequently enacted. Such debates are therefore reduced to sterile exercises, as in a debating club.

Closed-door or informal consultations remain the rule rather than the exception for Security Council meetings. Open or public meetings take place only after agreements are reached behind closed doors. In this process, we have witnessed the "invisible" use of the veto time and again. The practice of informal consultations runs contrary to the requirements of transparency and accountability.

For us, the Security Council is an important and prestigious organ of the United Nations system. This institution can maintain its prestige only if its reform process is carried out in a transparent and open manner. We are deeply concerned at the attempts by some to cast doubt on the efficacy of the way in which the Open-ended Working Group is carrying out its mandate. We believe that the Open-ended Working Group is the only appropriate forum to continue with this exercise and come out with a viable solution, as mandated by the General Assembly.

We have entered an age where the words "power" and "prestige" have become anachronistic. We all must work together to ameliorate the plight of humanity, which needs peace, security and equal opportunity for development. Let us not do anything which would harm the interests of the international community or cause disillusionment among nations that hold the United Nations in the highest esteem, even revere it. Rather, we should strengthen their sense of belonging to the United Nations system, at this critical juncture of world history, when we all are combining our efforts in the pursuit of our shared objective to combat and eradicate terrorism.

Mr. Mejdoub (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): Barely two weeks ago, during our consideration of the Security Council's annual report to the General Assembly, 54 delegations — including mine — reiterated yet again the urgent need to expedite the process of Council reform. All 54 speakers highlighted the increasing demands on the Security Council, because that is the body to which the world turns when it requires meaningful answers.

However, since 1993 — after almost eight years of extensive and substantive deliberations — the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform has yet to produce a concrete and universally acceptable formula that would enable us to achieve the long-overdue reforms.

The fact remains that the outcome of eight years of intensive discussions on Council reform is in clear contrast to the urgency expressed on many occasions from this rostrum by an overwhelming majority of Member States, and also at the highest possible level during the Millennium Summit.

The report of the Working Group before us is a reflection of the frustrating stalemate that we have witnessed since the establishment of the Group, as the report is but a mere compilation of opposing ideas and proposals that we have been considering for eight years now. Of course, we acknowledge the progress that has been made in certain aspects of Security Council reform, in particular with respect to the Council's working methods, as well as the usefulness of the ideas that have been presented so far. In fact, the lengthy deliberations within the Working Group have allowed us to identify a number of key elements for a reform package that are agreed on by the majority of the membership.

These elements are: first, the need to reform the composition and functioning of the Security Council in order to make that body more representative; secondly, the need to consider the question of the veto concurrently with that of an increase in the Security Council's membership; thirdly, the need further to improve the Council's working methods and its decision-making process in order to ensure greater openness, transparency and democracy within it; fourthly, the need to consider all aspects of reform as an integrated whole; and fifthly, the need periodically to review a reformed Council.

It is clear, therefore, that the elements of a solution are available to us. What is lacking is not ideas or proposals, but the necessary political will and a concrete commitment to achieve our common goal, as stated in General Assembly resolution 48/26 and reiterated in the Millennium Declaration.

Allow me briefly to reiterate and elaborate on my country's position on Security Council reform.

First, the ultimate goal of this reform is to enhance democratic and equitable representation within the Council as well as its accountability, credibility and effectiveness.

Secondly, the Security Council should reflect the political and economic realities of today's world. It must have the necessary democratic legitimacy to act on behalf on the international community in the process of discharging the mandate conferred upon it by the Charter.

Thirdly, these objectives cannot be achieved without expanding both categories of members — permanent and non-permanent. A restructured Security Council should adequately represent the developing countries and those industrialized countries that have met the criteria laid down in the Charter.

In this context, Tunisia remains firm in its support of the African position and the legitimate and amply justified request of the African countries to allocate to Africa two permanent seats, with all of the privileges granted to members in this category, and two additional non-permanent seats. Tunisia also supports the rotation formula endorsed by the African heads of State and Government. We believe, however, that this formula is not to be imposed as an option on the other regional groups. It is also in this context that Tunisia supports the allocation of permanent seats to Japan and Germany, which we view as candidates worthy of permanent membership in the Security Council.

Fourthly, the Non-Aligned Movement's fallback position is to be considered only as a last resort, if and when we have exhausted all efforts to reach agreement on the expansion of the category of permanent members.

Fifthly, the issue of the veto must be addressed as an integral part of the reform package.

In this regard, Tunisia supports the Non-Aligned Movement's position that we should limit the use of the veto to actions taken under Chapter VII of the Charter. It goes without saying that it is crucial that the permanent members of the Security Council have a positive and constructive attitude on this issue. In the expansion of the number of permanent members, one sole veto should not be allowed to bring Council's decisions to a halt.

Sixthly, the working methods of the Council and its subsidiary bodies, in particular the sanctions committees, must be further improved in order to enhance the Council's transparency, accountability and effectiveness. In this particular area, we are happy to note the Working Group's progress in achieving a convergence of views on many of these questions. We also note with satisfaction that the Security Council itself is contributing to this process.

Finally, the issue of the periodic review of the reformed Security Council is an indispensable element of the reform package and has to be seriously considered. Such a review should be viewed as a confidence-building measure that would allow us to make any necessary adjustments in the future. More importantly, it would provide us with an accountability mechanism making it possible to assess the contribution of new members in adding to the effectiveness of the Security Council.

We are concerned that the deadlock prevailing in the Working Group's deliberations is worsening. The fact remains that without a genuine political will and spirit of compromise, the whole reform process will be an exercise in futility. International relations must free themselves from the attitudes of the pre-Second World War period. Fifty years — almost two generations — have passed. It is time to adapt international institutions to the realities of the modern world. We will gain in representation, effectiveness and, most certainly, democracy.

The President of the previous session of the General Assembly underlined the points of divergence and convergence in his statement delivered at the closure of the fifty-fifth session. He also concluded, in the light of the answers to his letter addressed to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of all Member States, that we must bring the issue of Council reform to a higher political level and directly involve our decision-makers in the process. We strongly support this approach, which will enable us to drive the reform process forward and proceed to the next step: the drafting of a reform package outline to which all of us aspire.

My delegation encourages the President, as current Chairman of the Working Group, to use his authority and diplomatic skills to move the process of Council reform ahead. We hope that his efforts will result in concrete and decisive recommendations to the General Assembly that can be presented by the Working Group on the occasion of its tenth anniversary.

We look forward to cooperating closely with the President and his two Vice-Chairmen in order to make the necessary progress towards reaching this objective.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): As has been reiterated on so many occasions, the most ceremonious of which was the Millennium Summit over a year ago, the majority of Member States advocate a Security Council that is more transparent, democratic, representative and accountable. Those who want a change for the better are in the majority, not those who defend the status quo with the ambition of joining it.

An effective, fair and democratic reform of the Security Council will be possible only if consensus is reached on every component of reform. Hence, the Open-ended Working Group on Council reform is of fundamental importance. More than ever, Spain

champions the usefulness and necessity of the Working Group for several reasons.

First, the greater transparency achieved in the Council's working methods is the result of the efforts over the last eight years of many delegations in the Working Group, including mine. If today we are able to welcome undeniable progress in the field of transparency, it is mostly due to the debates and negotiations undertaken in the Working Group. Yet, there still remains a lot to be done, as we explained at length in our statement on item 11, "Report of the Security Council", two weeks ago.

Moreover, we are, unfortunately, far from reaching general agreement on the expansion of the Security Council. Consequently, discussions have to continue, for we must not forget that Council reform is a multifaceted issue, as noted in the Millennium Declaration, which calls for "a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects". The Working Group is the only existing forum for achieving that comprehensive reform to which our high-level representatives committed themselves on 8 September 2000. Approaches aimed at settling key aspects of Council expansion separately, and even in forums other than the Working Group on Council reform, will not lead to the necessary consensus.

My delegation has stated on many occasions that it favours expansion of the Security Council, but only in the number of non-permanent members.

The veto issue is the essential question of Council reform. Currently, the Working Group on Council reform is the only forum in which we can discuss this very important issue. The issue is of capital importance. An overwhelming majority of States unequivocally wish to eliminate or at least curtail this unequalled instrument of power.

Nonetheless, we are aware that our aspiration is somewhat illusory in nature, since those who have the veto are not likely to renounce it, even partially. We know as well that the condition of being a permanent member is inexorably linked to the veto power. Bearing this in mind, the unavoidable question is: are we aware of what the result would be — in the year 2001, 56 years after the Second World War — of increasing the number of permanent members on the basis of questionable criteria, and of granting them this all-embracing power that could undermine any resolution — as new members would also have the veto power? Can we today collectively and bitterly lament that the United Nations has not been able to act because the veto of a single Member has paralysed it, and then tomorrow grant this power of paralysis to another select handful?

The veto is a crucial element of the reform, particularly of the expansion of the membership. In the twenty-first century, when Member States are clamouring to curtail the existing veto power, it would be at the very least odd to grant it to another group of countries. The paradox aside, we would be creating a new class of privileged States, thus doing a disservice to the United Nations.

Ms. Murnaghan (Ireland): It is not surprising that many of the statements we have heard here yesterday and today have had a common theme — that the world we are now living in is a very different place to that which existed when we addressed the topic of Security Council reform in the General Assembly at this time last year, or even when the Open-ended Working Group concluded its work for this year in July. We clearly live in a changed world. This must give us pause for reflection as to whether the institutions that serve us, most particularly in the United Nations, are equipped to meet the challenges of a more complex world or whether they need to be adapted.

We have seen, in fact, that the United Nations has so far responded extremely well — some might say, surprisingly well — to the enormous challenge that the horrendous events of 11 September 2001 have presented.

We have seen how quickly and concretely both the Security Council and the General Assembly reacted in the days following the outrage perpetrated against the United States and, by extension, the rest of the world, because terrorism is an outrage to all freedom-loving people everywhere. The United Nations has seen its role enhanced as the body where, with the necessary political will, effective action in the international fight against terrorism can be taken.

It is nevertheless understandable perhaps, in the context of everything else going on, if some issues suddenly seem less immediate. Some might feel, for whatever reasons, that the question of reform of the Security Council — which, after all, has been under discussion for eight years already — may perhaps be less urgent just now.

On the contrary, we believe that just as the role of the United Nations has grown in importance, so too has that of the Security Council. The Council showed that when the situation truly demanded it, it could act collectively, promptly and with determination. However, while welcoming the prompt and proactive response of the Council, we believe that this new, even more complex world we live in makes reform of the Council more important, not less, and, equally, makes it more, not less, urgent. We continue to wish to see a Council that structurally and procedurally is more reflective of current world realities and is even more transparent.

The Millennium Summit in September 2000 set a number of challenges for the United Nations and for all of us as Member States. In particular, our heads of State and Government resolved "To intensify our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects." (*resolution 55/2, para. 30*) Speaking from this podium last year we said that this was a clear challenge that required adequate response in the creativity, flexibility and determination that we as Member States had to bring to the issue of reform. As the representative of Belgium noted yesterday, however, discussions in the Open-ended Working Group over the past year showed how difficult it is in practice to reach agreement in this area.

Let us be frank: while there was some progress on working methods and a useful discussion on the veto, the overall results did not live up to expectations. We very much welcomed the interesting and interactive discussions between the Open-ended Working Group and the members of the Council, and we hope that these might become a more regular occurrence in the future. We nevertheless believe there is more we can do in the Open-ended Working Group, provided the necessary will is there. Indeed, we are enjoined to do more by our political leaders.

We encourage the Council, for its part, to pursue in tandem its efforts to make its work more transparent. In this regard, we commend the greater openness towards troop-contributing countries, and we encourage continuing enhancement of the tripartite relationship between the Security Council, troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat. As a current member of the Council, and as President during October, we were pleased to preside over discussions within the Council on reviewing possible changes to the format and content of the annual report of the Council to the General Assembly and hope to see results in next year's report.

Allow me at this point, to pay tribute to the previous Chairman, Harri Holkeri, and to the two Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group, Ambassadors de Saram and Ingólfsson, for their sterling work over the past year. President Holkeri's efforts were directed at making the work of the Group more focused and productive, and he deserves all credit for this. We greatly appreciated the extensive background documentation that the Bureau prepared to help the Open-ended Working Group's consideration, in particular, of cluster II issues. This helped the Group address individual issues in a more sharply focused way, but in the event, there was little advance on the main substantive issues.

As a member of a group of 10 countries that has attempted over the years to address the issues of reform in a pragmatic and realistic way, we still believe that there is useful work that the Open-ended Working Group can do in bringing the reform dossier to a point where, as Mr. Holkeri stated in his concluding remarks at the close of the fifty-fifth session of the Assembly, a move to negotiations can be made. We are supportive of the idea of taking reform to a higher political level, but remain open at this point as to the exact form and timing. Our principal concern, however, is to address reform in a comprehensive manner, recalling that we have been tasked to address reform "in all its aspects" with the aim of achieving a reformed Security Council that is more representative of the membership, more transparent in its working methods and more effective overall.

Mr. Holkeri also rightly pointed to the central position of the veto in any outcome on reform of the Council. We still believe that the proposals that Ireland, together with other countries, presented some time ago regarding limitations on the scope and application of the veto as part of a global approach to reform continue to provide a pragmatic, achievable, albeit partial, solution to this highly political and sensitive problem. We would hope that delegations might take a renewed look at them.

Finally, Ireland looks forward to taking up again the work of the Open-ended Working Group, and I wish to assure President Han, that my delegation stands ready to work with him, the Bureau and members in the Open-ended Working Group in the coming year so

as to make real progress towards comprehensive reform of the Security Council.

Mr. Al-Shamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to express my gratitude and appreciation to the President of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council and his two Vice-Chairmen for their last report, which contains valuable information that reflects their great efforts to reach a consensus in the area of strengthening international representation in the Security Council and making it more transparent in its implementation of the responsibilities entrusted to it in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Since the beginning of the last decade the world has witnessed the launch of a comprehensive operation to reform and energize the institutions and activities of the United Nations, to have their capabilities and contributions rise to the level of the new international challenges that occurred as a result of the post-cold-war changes and the concepts of the new world order based on principles of partnership, democracy and pluralism of interests among States.

At the Millennium Summit last year the Heads of State and Government agreed on the need to intensify efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council, because the Council is the main organ of this Organization, responsible for maintaining international peace and security, in accordance with Article 24 of the Charter. The reform is to reinforce the Council's various roles in international peace-making and in protecting humanity from the destruction of war and the grave violations of human rights.

The number of United Nations Members was 51 when the Organization was founded in 1945, and the number of non-permanent members in the Security Council was six, representing 12 per cent of the full membership. Today, with the membership having risen to 189, the shape of the Council's present framework does not reflect the actual, democratic or just reality in representing the international community. This not only constitutes a failure in the political formation of the Council, but also weakens the transparency of its decisions on many important international issues on its agenda. Therefore, we strongly support the continued urgent international desire for substantial reform of its framework and working methods, including increasing the number of members so that its size, composition and international political activity are better suited to the increasing security challenges in international relations.

My country's delegation, which has closely followed the deliberations conducted by the Open-ended Working Group since 1993, as well as the various initiatives and suggestions that the Chairmen of the geographic groups submitted on this matter, is concerned about the continued deepening of differences in the views of States, specifically those related to the suggested shape and size of the Council's membership. We renew our full support for the Non-Aligned Movement's position on this matter and announce our adherence to three principal elements.

First, reform of the Security Council and expansion of its membership should be an integral part of a common, comprehensive project that adheres to the principle of equality among States in regard to sovereignty and just geographic distribution, away from the discriminating policy or selectivity practised today.

Secondly, any increase in the membership of the Security Council should not lead to an increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent seats of the developed countries at the expense of the developing countries. Instead, correcting the inadequate representation of the developing countries should be taken into consideration in any suggested new formation of the Council, in order to deal with the existing failure in geographical representation and to strengthen its international political balance.

Thirdly, since the Arab States number 21, approximately 12 per cent of all United Nations Member States, we call for the allocation of at least two non-permanent seats for Arab representation in the Council, in addition to another permanent rotating seat for Arab States within the framework of the mechanism of understanding between the Asian and African Groups. This would contribute to reinforcing the effective participation of these States, not only in dealing with their most complicated regional issues, but also in enhancing their participation in joint efforts to establish regional and international peace and security.

We are satisfied with some of the limited measures adopted during the past couple of years that have contributed to the improvement of some of the

Council's working methods, especially those relating to enhancing the openness of its open sessions to reveal the positions of member and non-member States on agenda issues. However, we are greatly disappointed with the continuation of unilateral and double-standard policies of some permanent and influential members on some security and peace issues on the Council's agenda. I refer particularly to those policies that have often prevented the holding of urgent Council meetings to deal with disappointing developments in the Palestinian question and the situation in the Middle East, or to take mandatory action to halt the murder, excessive violence, measures to expand settlements and siege, and unethical and irresponsible tampering with religious and historical holy sites and property, that the Israeli occupation forces practise daily against the unarmed Palestinian people, with no regard for the Council's many resolutions, whether those identifying principles for resolving the Palestinian question — resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and others — or those that prohibit all Israeli measures that violate the norms of international law and human rights instruments, foremost of which is the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

We therefore stress the necessity to implement a serious, comprehensive and objective periodic evaluation of the Council's working methods in order to institutionalize its working methods and decision-making practices. We also call for rationalization of the use of the veto, especially on topics related to regrettable developments on some just peoples' issues raised at international forums and set forth in the agendas of this international Organization for more than 50 years. Furthermore, this procedure, which is considered most discriminating and unfavourable for the vast majority of States, should not constitute an obstacle to efforts to contain security crises and find just and lasting solutions to such issues, based on the purposes and principles of the Charter, resolutions of international legitimacy and international law.

In conclusion, we hope that our deliberations on this issue will lead to more constructive international understanding to achieve the desired reforms in the structure of the Security Council, a fair increase of its membership and improvement of its working methods, thus guaranteeing the best understanding and discharge of its increasing responsibilities in the maintenance of regional and international peace and security.

Mr. Serbini (Brunei Darussalam): At the outset, I join other speakers in conveying our appreciation to Mr. Harri Holkeri, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, for facilitating work on this issue, as well as to the co-Chairs of the Open-ended Working Group on reform of the Security Council for their contributions. The report before us is a culmination of the hard work and time spent on this important subject.

While there has been some progress in the effort to improve the working methods of the Council, we are indeed far from reaching our central objective of restructuring it. Countless proposals for restructuring have been worked out, but, unfortunately, they have not been seriously considered. Views of member countries continue to diverge.

Eight years is quite a long period to spend on such an important and complex issue. It is vital that we now move on to renew our commitment, as called for by the Secretary-General. Most important, our leaders last year gave us the political mandate to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council.

The rapidly changing world environment has posed new threats and challenges to international peace and security. This and the increase in the membership of the United Nations make reform a compelling necessity. At the same time, we must also bear in mind that there should be no "quick-fix" solutions to the expansion of the Security Council.

Linked to the need for expansion are the most important issues of equitable representation and the use of the veto. It is encouraging that most Member States would like to see additional permanent and non-permanent members on the Council. However, the issue of the veto remains a complex one, on which each Member State has its own agenda. For our part, we feel that its use should be curtailed and confined to matters coming under Chapter VII of the Charter. The prospects of its eventual elimination should be considered accordingly. Notwithstanding the difficult issues that we have to deal with, we must now intensify our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects.

In conclusion, the Security Council of the twenty-first century should fully reflect the aspirations of the world's people. Brunei Darussalam, for its part, offers its continued support and will work closely with other

members of the Organization to bring about a strengthened Council.

Mr. Akopian (Armenia): Armenia attaches great importance to Security Council reform and supports the ongoing efforts aimed at the strengthening of the Council and enabling it to react promptly and effectively to the current challenges and threats. We believe that the reform process must also ensure that the most important body responsible for international peace and security reflects the political and economic realities of the world, which has changed dramatically since 1945.

Eight years ago the General Assembly established the Open-ended Working Group on the reform of Security Council, and some progress has been achieved during recent years. However, the reform process has so far been too slow, and the Council is still not fully representative of the general membership. We share the view that this important body should be more representative and more transparent in its activities and that its decisions should be endowed with greater authority.

The positions of most of the Member States on the issue of Security Council reform are well known. The debates at the Millennium Assembly demonstrated once again that the vast majority of Member States supports the expansion of the Security Council's permanent and non-permanent membership.

We also believe that real reform lies in expansion in both categories, in conformity with the principles of equality and sovereignty among Member States and of equitable geographical representation.

Recent decades have witnessed a growing complexity of the issue of international security, with more countries immediately involved in and responsible for the maintenance of global peace. Therefore, the composition of the bodies responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security must evolve accordingly. In particular, we strongly believe that the new permanent members must have the ability and readiness to contribute both financially and politically to the United Nations activities. In this regard we support the desire of Germany and Japan to acquire the status of permanent members of the Security Council.

The issue of equitable geographical representation is of particular importance for us. We support the proposals to increase the regional representation, especially for the regions that are currently under-represented, such as Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. In this regard, we believe that India deserves to be seriously considered as a candidate for permanent membership.

We believe that any increase in the non-permanent membership of the Security Council should ensure an enhanced representation of the Group of Eastern European States through the allocation of an additional non-permanent seat to this Group.

Armenia favours any step towards greater openness and transparency in the work of the Security Council. Some progress has already been registered in this area. In particular, there are signs of increasing transparency in the work of the Council, and the growing number of open debates gives an opportunity for non-members to participate in the deliberations of this important body.

As for the right of veto for the permanent members of the Council, it is our understanding that a number of States support its curtailment or elimination. We hope that the Working Group will reach a consensus on this matter, making the Security Council capable of facing the challenges of this century. We strongly believe that the effectiveness of the Council must be maintained. A Council capable of effectively carrying out its responsibilities is of paramount importance for all of us.

As we all recall, the Millennium Declaration calls upon Member States "To intensify our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects" (*resolution 55/2, para. 30*). It is our common responsibility to translate this commitment into reality. Recent developments in world politics and international relations suggest that reform of the body responsible for international security cannot be delayed any longer. In this regard, we support the suggestions concerning this process made by the General Assembly President, Harri Holkeri, in his statement on the last day of the fifty-fifth session.

Since the whole process of United Nations reform cannot be completed without reform of the Security Council, we will support any effort that can facilitate the accomplishment of this objective. We hope that this process will reinforce the credibility of this important body and lead us to a more representative and efficient Security Council.

Programme of work

The President in the Chair.

The President: I should like to inform Members of some changes to the programme of work of the General Assembly.

Agenda item 23, "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal", which was scheduled for Friday morning, 2 November 2001, will instead be taken up on Tuesday morning, 11 December.

Agenda item 171, "Observance of the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict", originally scheduled for Tuesday morning, 6 November, will now be taken up on Monday morning, 5 November, as the second item.

The announcement of voluntary contributions to the 2001 programmes of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near-East, originally scheduled for Tuesday, 4 December, will now take place on Friday, 7 December 2001, at 11 a.m.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.